

that there will be a price to pay if that should happen. It is our sincere hope that it does not, and that this hearing and the spotlight that it will shine on Cuban political prisoners will contribute to authentic freedom and respect for the human rights of all the people of Cuba.

REMEMBERING THE ARMENIAN
VICTIMS OF THE SUMGAI,
KIROVABAD, AND BAKU PO-
GROMS

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2012

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the Armenian victims of the Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku pogroms who were killed in Azerbaijan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the United States stood as a beacon for freedom around the world, the Soviet Union suffered from ethnic strife and internal unrest. Communist ideology and a command economy could not hold together the Soviet republics and their diverse ethnic groups. The Soviet Union—despite its rhetoric—failed to protect and ensure the rights of its ethnic minorities, especially the ethnic Armenians who were targeted in pogroms in Azerbaijan.

In February 1988 hundreds of Armenians were singled out, driven from their homes, and murdered by Azerbaijani rioters. Despite Sumgait's proximity to security forces in the capital city, the riots and destruction continued for three days unabated. Credible sources report that hundreds of Armenians were killed or wounded; Soviet officials at the time acknowledged 30 deaths and 200 injured.

This tragedy did not go unrecognized at the time. Several U.S. Senators rose to speak out against this violence. They sent letters to the government of the Soviet Union. The Senate unanimously passed an amendment urging the Soviet government to respect the aspirations of the Armenian people and urging it to discontinue its serious violations of human rights.

In Kirovabad later that same year Armenians were once again targeted. My friend and colleague from Michigan, Representative SANDER LEVIN, joined 11 other members of the House and Senate to write to Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev in advance of his historic trip to the United States urging him to protect the Armenians living in Azerbaijan.

Unfortunately, in January 1990 in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, Armenians were once again targeted in a weeklong pogrom. Civil society called upon the Azerbaijan government to respect the rights of, and prevent crimes against, its Armenian minority population.

Today, I rise to remember the victims and honor their memories. America has always stood for democratic freedom and human rights—whether then during the Cold War—or today during the historic transition in the Middle East. Democracies cannot flourish without respecting the rights of the minority. Twenty-four years later it is important that we not forget the victims of Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku. I call upon the countries in the region to respect the human rights of all residents—whether majority or minority—and to ensure that these events never happen again.

UNITED TECHNOLOGIES

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2012

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor United Technologies on a monumental achievement—spending more than \$1 billion on education and training for their employees. Since its inception under the leadership of George David 15 years ago, the Employee Scholars Program has been a vital source of ongoing education for UTC employees to obtain a degree, advance their skill sets, or gain knowledge in any number of fields. It provides for the costs of tuition, books, and fees up-front and allows employees to pursue their education at any accredited institution of higher education.

Through promoting a culture of lifelong learning, UTC has set an example for the entire corporate community of how to provide a benefit that will have lasting results for their employees, the company, and I daresay the economy. Over 30,000 employees have earned a degree through the Employee Scholars Program, and many others have been able to access coursework to improve their skills. The unique, and in my opinion exemplary aspect of this program is that the company does not require that the employee pursue education directly related to their current position. This allows UTC employees the freedom to choose what they want to study, whether they think it will help them in their current position, a future position, or an entirely different field altogether. It is my belief that ongoing learning leads to more productive workers and a more productive society.

I applaud UTC again for their sustained commitment to lifelong learning and commend them on the milestone accomplishment.

RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEMINOLE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 17, 2012

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 50th anniversary of the Seminole Vocational Education Center, SVEC, which I have the privilege to represent. This facility is truly an example of how one citizen's vision can be brought to life through the efforts of an entire community. Originally named the "Ag Farm" the facility first opened its doors in 1961. In the past 50 years, this facility has grown from one square acre of land managed by a few staff members and 60 students, to one that now spans 42 acres and provides training to over 450 students.

It all began with Seminole resident Bill Moore, who had a vision for an agricultural education center in Pinellas. After acquiring an acre of land he, the staff, and students cleared the land together and the facilities were built. Through partnerships with businesses in the community the center has grown to offer multiple courses in a wide variety of areas. Students can receive technical certificates in everything from carpentry to commercial art. The

center even offers math, English, and science courses as a part of a program that targets at risk youth in order to prevent students from dropping out of school.

The SVEC has been receiving recognition for decades. Their students have proven themselves as award winners at the state, regional, and national levels, not to mention the dozens of newspaper articles that track their growth and accomplishments throughout the years. The ambition of the staff and students at the SVEC has made it a facility that has not only lasted fifty years, but has gotten better each year.

In closing, I am honored to represent the teachers, students, and community members who have taken part in the SVEC. Their dedication has made an invaluable impact on our community and its residents. I ask my colleagues to join with me today in recognizing this important milestone and to wish the center continued success in the years to come.

PROTECTING INVESTMENT IN OIL
SHAPE THE NEXT GENERATION
OF ENVIRONMENTAL, ENERGY,
AND RESOURCE SECURITY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 15, 2012

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 3408) to set clear rules for the development of United States oil shale resources, to promote shale technology research and development, and for other purposes:

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Chair, in the aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster, President Obama, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, a national commission, businesses and environmentalists reached consensus that 80% of the fines and penalties that BP is required to pay for violating the Clean Water Act be devoted to Gulf of Mexico recovery and research. All have urged Congress to act, but unfortunately, the Congress has not done so.

As Co-Chair of the bipartisan Gulf Coast Caucus, I ask my colleagues not to let the effort languish any longer. The House should act expeditiously to do so and devote 80% of the Deepwater Horizon fines and penalties to the Gulf of Mexico.

Unfortunately, the Scalise amendment could be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular piece of legislation, such as the RESTORE Act. While the RESTORE Act does devote 80% of the Clean Water Act fines to the Gulf States, it is flawed in its current form and does not achieve meaningful recovery of the Gulf of Mexico.

So while I urge my colleagues to defeat the amendment, the time is now for the Congress to pass an 80% bill and focus on the economic and environmental health of the Gulf of Mexico.

Extensive review of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster and the historic degradation of the Gulf of Mexico was conducted by the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus Report, and the EPA Gulf Restoration